

Betty and Karl Eichhorn Biography

**Compiled by Hugh Nicolay
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Betty passed away on September 23, 2017. She is survived by two brothers, a sister, and six nieces and nephews located in Florida. A memorial mass is to be held at the Church of our Savior in Cocoa Beach on Thursday, December 7 at 10:30 AM. A reception will follow. Donations in Betty's name can be made to the church at her request.

Karl passed away on November 26, 2017. He is survived by a sister and two nieces in Ohio. Donations in Karl's name can be made to The Nature Conservancy at Betty's suggestion.

Betty's and Karl's cremains will be interred at the Cape Canaveral National Cemetery.

Betty was born on September 1, 1933 in South Hampton, Long Island, New York. She was the first of four children born to Nellie E. (Rayburn) and Joseph T. Beresheim, Sr.. Her mother was a school teacher and her father a merchant marine. When Betty was six years old the family moved to Coral Gables, Florida. She completed her secondary schooling at Saint Theresa Catholic School in 1950. Her classmates voted her the most intelligent female in the graduating class. Betty received her BS degree in mathematics from the University of Florida in 1956. As a student she worked part time at the Library of Florida History and read most of the archives.

After college Betty accepted a positions with North American Aviation, General Motors, and TRW at Cape Canaveral. She performed telemetry and engineering test data analysis tasks. She rented a room in Cocoa. While working for GM she took notice of Karl Eichhorn and told a friend "I am going to marry that guy." They dated on Thursday nights or went to Orlando to avoid the obvious office romance. Betty told Karl that if he was serious, they should get married. They were married on October 1, 1965 at Church of Our Savior in Cocoa Beach. She moved into Karl's bachelor pad in Cocoa Beach and it became their home for 53 years. Karl soon gave up his weekly poker nights and sometime later sold his corvette. From then on they were a couple in all that they did, and they did a lot together.

Karl Frederick Eichhorn, Jr. was born on June 4, 1924 in Cleveland, Ohio. He was the first of two children born to Marguerite (Bissell) and Karl F. Eichhorn, Sr.. The family moved to Barnesville, Ohio. Karl's father was a chicken farmer. Karl had an early interest in photography. His first camera, an Argus C3, was a gift from his parents at eighth grade graduation for achieving first place in Ohio in the state wide placement examination for eighth grade students. He worked part time in a photography studio during his teen years and began his commitment to joimialing. Karl graduated from high school in 1943 and immediately enlisted in the US Army Air Corps. After basic training in St. Petersburg, Florida he was

assigned to the 726 Bomb Squad of the 451st Bomb Group located first in Northern Africa and then Italy. He was an armorer, tasked with loading bombs and ammunition in bombers headed to Germany. In his free time he set up a make shift dark room and processed his film and took on developing and printing pictures for fellow airmen.

When the war ended, Karl returned home and enrolled in Ohio State University where he received his Masters degree in Physics. He wanted to get his doctorate, but his VA benefits ran out. His first employment was with General Electric in Schenectady, New York where he was a 'rocket scientist'. Karl began his interest in hiking and camping in the nearby Adirondack Mountains. Karl left GE and accepted a position with TRW as a systems engineer and engineering supervisor at Cape Canaveral where Betty spotted him.

Betty asked Karl to go with her on an Audubon field trip. Betty's father was an Audubon member. It wasn't long after they married that Karl became president of the little "Cocoa Bird Club" as it was informally known. In reality, Karl and Betty were co-presidents of the Audubon chapter and many subsequent environmental endeavors. They transformed the bird club into a full fledged chapter of the Florida and National Audubon Societies. Membership increased four fold. They expanded the scope of the group beyond birds to include all aspects of natural history. They invited well known speakers from all over the state to the monthly meetings. New camping, canoeing, and hiking activities attracted younger families. Karl and Betty began publishing a monthly newsletter. Conservation and youth education were added to the chapter agenda. It was also a time of tremendous change in environmental laws and enlightenment at all levels of society — Earth Day, Rachel Carson's 'Silent Spring', Marjory Douglas' River of Grass', The Clean Air Act, The Clean Water Act, The Wilderness Act, The National Environmental Protection Act. Karl and Betty and many others witnessed the end of dredge and filling of mangrove wetlands, the termination of the channelization of the St. Johns River, the demise of the Cross Florida Barge Canal, and the suspension of the construction of the Everglades Jetport. They also saw the creation of new parks and preserves including Lori Wilson Park, Ulamay Preserve, Turkey Creek Sanctuary, Thousand Islands of Cocoa Beach, Tosohatchee Preserve and Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge.

Betty and Karl continued to be active in Audubon after their four year term from 1967 to 1971. Soon Karl found himself president of the fledging Florida Trail Association and continued in that capacity for two years. He attended far flung board meetings and gatherings. He cut and marked miles of trails. The Association under his leadership drew trail maps and compiled guides. Somehow Betty and Karl wedged all their volunteer hours into their Cape work schedule.

In the early 1970s, Betty and Karl's Cape employer wanted to transfer them to California. They declined, preferring to stay here in their Florida homeland. They opened a store specializing in camping and outdoor equipment called The Wilderness Shop. Neither Betty nor Karl had small business experience but to no ones surprise, they made a success of the venture which they continued for 15 years until retirement.

Retirement gave Betty and Karl even more time to fill their lives with interests and projects. Betty took on leadership roles in the Cocoa Beach Garden Club where she edited their monthly newsletter. As a member of the Central Brevard Genealogy Society, she taught the introductory class in genealogy and dug deep into the science of DNA testing. She also researched her family history. She maintained the official bird list for the Cocoa Christmas Bird Count and the Space Coast Bird and Wildlife Festival. Karl had typed up his daily journal from WWII and years later Betty edited it into a book. Karl expanded his interest in World War II and the Civil War. He participated in and was chair the local Civil War Roundtable group. Karl volunteered at the Merritt Island NWR Visitor's Center.

Karl expanded his antique camera collection and antique outboard motor collection. Betty had a silver coin collection, a children's dish collection, and various glass and porcelain items. They took their collections to antique shows. Betty and Karl devoured a dozen of magazines each month and accumulated books on every subject of interest to them. They watched very little TV, maybe PBS news, and never had cable.

They continued to camp and travel. When the old VW bus finally gave out after many engine swaps, all done by Karl of course, they bought a Chevy van which Karl converted to a RV camper of sorts. They went West several times, north to Hudson Bay and northeast to Newfoundland. They bought a small used self contained camping van to use as their camping days came to a close.

Betty and Karl were a renaissance couple. They had little interest in the trappings or activities which use up time that could be better spent diving deep into a subject until they knew and experienced just about all that was readily at hand. Instead of going out to dinner and movie, you might find them knee deep in a remote bog with a tape recorder and flashlight in hand trying to identify and record frog singing after a spring rain, just for their own intellectual curiosity and satisfaction. They are a couple to admire, for who they were, how they lived, and what they unselfishly gave.